DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 024 EC 171 181

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TITLE Measures for Preparing Mentally Handicapped People to Live in the Community.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the International Congress on Mal-adjusted Children of the Spanish Association for Special Education (AEDES), (Madrid, Spain, April 25-27, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Daily Living Skills; Foreign Countries; *Group Homes; *Mental Retardation; Normalization (Handicapped); *Program Development; Residential Programs; Self Care Skills; Young Adults
IDENTIFIERS *Israel

ABSTRACT

The father of a retarded adult describes the development of a course designed to teach independent living skills to mentally retarded adults living in a group home in Israel. The course included instruction on home management, food preparation, and interpersonal skills. How initial neighborhood opposition diminished is recounted. Difficulties faced by newcomers are described, including proper hygiene and social skills. The differences between a hostel (a larger home) and the smaller flat are noted, and a chart depicts four stages toward independence of residents. (CL)

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ED252024

A K I M ;
Israel Association for the
Rehabilitation of the mentally
Handicapped.
Chedera District Branch.

MEASURES FOR PREPARING MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY.;

An account prepared for the international Congress
A.E.D.E.S.
on mal-adjusted children in Madrid, Spain,
taking place at the end of April 1984 .

by

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Chairman of the Chedera Branch of Akim

The author is the father of a retarded son,age 35 years,
a member of the National Central Committee of A K I M .

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A K I M Israel Association for
Rehabilitation of the mentally
Handicapped. Hadera District.

M E A S U R E S F O R P R E P A R I N G M E N T A L L Y H A N D I C A P P E D P E O P L E T O L I V E I N T H E C O M M U N I T Y .:

I) Introduction.

When we started in 1977 to build our Hostel for 16 residents, we intended to prevent their transfer into closed institutions because they had succeeded in their sheltered workshop tasks. Their parents became older and asked us to enable their children to continue to enjoy life in the community because they themselves could not give them anymore the neccessary attention. The people themselves were at the age of twenty to thirty five.

2) Two years later the local Department of welfare asked us to receive another client, 45 years of age, a russian immigrant, who after his mother's death lived alone in a small flat near our Hostel. This man proved not to be suitable for life in the community due to severe illness and behaviour problems and had to be transferred soon to another Home. But now this flat was given to us, and soon we managed to settle in it four young men who were living in the Hostel and who were working in factories. They recieved there nearly normal salaries in spite of their lower I.Q. (50 - 70). These young men continued to receive from the Hostel all their needs (food, laundry, clothing etc.) and only slept there. Gradually they were taught to prepare their breakfast by themselves and later they also learned to buy their foodstuffs in the nearby grocery.

3) One of the clients occasionally got angry spells of bad behaviour toward his fellow residents. After repeated warnings did not yield results, he had to return to the Hostel for a few months: this quietening down period resulted in marked improvement, and since last June he lives again with his pals in another flat, without any complaints !

4) By the generosity of a group of Christian friends in Germany we could in 1981 acquire another very nice flat in a Codominium Building with 12 families. The News of the "threat" to disturb the ordinary life in this house by bringing there retarded people caused violent reactions: I was summoned to a general Meeting and brain-washed for two hours; the house committee went to the Police, applied to the Town Mayor, but were quietely sent home by both. They started to collect money in order to arrange a Court case against us; all this after

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our patient repeated explanations about the excellent behaviour of our five lady candidates for this flat fell upon deaf ears. They requested in strong terms our withdrawal and sale of the flat and were not ashamed to threaten us with broken windows ...

5) Gradually we bought the furniture for the flat and after a few weeks we started a course of instruction of three months for the girls': After finishing their regular work they came to the flat at four o'clock with their counsillor in order to get acquainted with their new living place.

The program of this Course was fully coordinated with our social worker who guided and strengthened the counsillor in difficult moments. These girls had been living in the Hostel for one to five years and had therefore made already good progress on the long road to independence. Two of them were working in a rehabilitioncentre workshop; one in a factory doing cleaning and coffee-shop jobs; one in the kitchen of the Hostel and one as an aide in our special kindergarden. Three of them read and write quite well, but only one can do some reckoning.

5) Details of the preliminary course of instruction.

a) Handling of the Intercome appliance; managing the use of three different keys in order to enter the flat - and to leave it!
b) Appropriate behaviour when meeting other people in the staircase of the house.
c) what to do when there is a failure in the supply of electricity; when there is no water; a smell of gas, or the sewage is not working .
d) How to light gas, how to use the frigidaire.
e) How to buy daily the neccessary bread and milk products; how to prepare breakfast and later also the hot evening meal; how to write down what should be bought to-morrow, and how to plan and write down the Menu for a week.
f) How to do daily cleaning and use the washing machine etc.
g) How to manage one with the other without need to fight, or atleast to postpone it until the councillor arrives - she works with the girls only between 3 and 8 in the afternoon.

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7) In the beginning progress was very slow with three of the five girls, but we were exceedingly lucky with this group of girls because they all had a high motivation to move out of the "noisy" Hostel into their "own" flat. In spite of great ethnic and individual differences in age and upbringing and various personal weaknesses they manage to maintain a fairly good internal harmony, and under the guidance of a marvellous councillor they continue to make further progress in many aspects: 2 go regularily to folk dance meetings; two read the daily news paper, one loves Television. Occasionally they go to a lecture in a women's Club and also to some public singing group.

They sleep in this flat on their own, and their counsillor who worked in the first year five and also six days in the week with them, now sees them only three times a week. There is not yet a telephone in the flat, and when it will arrive they shall have to pay for their calls exactly as they pay now for electricity, water, house taxes and some of their clothes. All this causes some anxiety if their money will be enough for the whole month; but does this anxiety not exist in every household ?

8) All the mentioned preparations took place at the beginning under the suspicious and even hostile looks of their neighbours; but nobody will be surprised that when the girls actually moved into their flat at the first of June 1982, no harsh words were heard and no windows were broken. On the contrary! Half a year later I brought a reporter to the house and encouraged him to speak freely, without my presence, with one of our fierce opponents a year ago. All what he had to say was:" Such good neighbours every House is looking for!" And his wife added:" Perhaps You want to buy another flat in our House?" However, even to-day relations are only polite and correct; the girls are not invited into some homes; they hardly have time for it.

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9) Difficulties we encounter in new-comers to the Hostel :

Proper getting up in the morning.

Proper dressing, and according to the season. Proper washing and drying. Proper cleaning of teeth. Proper eating manners, how to use the knife, how to spread margarine thinly; to take on the plate only what one really wants to eat.

Being capable to use clean language; being polite and able to give in when neccessary. Taking his place in the group without putting himself in the middle of everything.

To stick to a job for a few minutes. Readiness to do some chores in rotation. Not to cry easily, not to laugh without reason, not to be angry in an exaggerated manner.

In spite of this long list: Progress is remarkable and everybody advances according to his own rythmus - and the amount of energy we are able to invest in him.

Some candidates to the Hostel come from closed institutions, some from well kept homes; others have suffered years without proper attention. Some parents have the right attitude and are able to work with us in the same direction; other parents need by themselves a lot of help to adjust to their situation ...

10) Some differences between Hostel and flat :

	IN THE HOSTEL	IN THE FLAT
a)	The clients are served many things.	The clients have to serve themselves.
b)	There exist wide individual differences between the clients.	There is definite need for some harmony between the residents.
c)	There doesn't exist a good harmony between all residents.	There is need for some positive interaction between the residents.
d)	There is no definite need for motivation to make progress in skills for independence.	There is a definite for such motivation.
e)	The individuum can hide or run away from meeting this or that resident antipathic to him.	No person can run away; in case of definite antipathy there is danger of violence.
f)	If some bad behaviour occurs, there is always some staff-person who can interfere.	The counsillor is present only during some hours; not at night and not during weekends.

g) The Hostel is capable to assimilate to some degree all kinds of fish: big ones and small ones, beautiful fish and ugly fish.

The atmospehre in a flat is more intimate; therefore everyone of the residents must learn early to give in and to give up, to give and take, even in very tiny things.

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II) FOUR STAGES TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE OF RESIDENTS;

	In the closed Institution	In the HOSTEL	In the men flat	In the Girls flat.
I. The cleaning of the own room	some	partly	nearly completely	completely
2) Buying of products	none	some	30 %	daily: 100% weekly: with the counsillor
3) Cooking	none	some help in the kitchen	30 %	100%
4) Going to the Bank	none	2 - 3	all	all
5) Paying of bills	none	2 - 3	all	all
6) The clients live according to orders	all	less	less	very few
7) The clients pay for their needs	none	There exists a common account for extra ammenities		Electricity, telephone, water, house taxes, colour television
8) There exist individualised programs to make progress	?	We start	We try	We are doing it.
9) The resident has influence on the order of the day	?	little	a lot	a lot
Io) Regular group talks with the clients take place	?	some	some more	nearly everyday
II) The clients have their own saving accounts	a few	many	all	all

I2) A new flat for six young men.

The group of four young men who were living in the small flat near the Hostel, moved in June 1983 into another, better equipped flat which is more than a kilometer apart from the hostel. They work in their factory long hours during five days, and thus their counsillor prepares for them their meals. But she only works with them for 4-5 days; thus they too, have learned to manage on their own: To prepare breakfast and sandwiches, to buy more products and generally to behave in an appropriate manner, although their temperament sometimes breaks through, and more serious quarrels happen with them, exactly as we had anticipated.

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In this house in which live six families no fears were expressed beforehand and no complaints were received. Possibly our proper management of the Hostel during seven years has got round and people are now more ready to give us credit and rely on our judgement of whom we find ready to live in the community.

I3) The latest group to live in the community.

Last December 1983 we did some renovating in the small flat near the hostel (which got empty in June) ,installed iron shutters and double locks because we now intended to put girls into this flat.Gradually the more advanced people moved out of the Hostel and we have difficulties to find suitable candidates for the flats.At first we tried to interest in this opportunity some men in the Hostel;but they were lacking motivation ! Why should they make special efforts,go through a preparation course when in the Hostel they get most things ready made ? Thus now two eager girls went through the course,got their own keys to the flat and they are very proud about it.We tried to prepare some other girls together with them,but there was no chance of success at this stage.

As we received lately some new residents into the Hostel- always with a look if they later woud be capable to move on to a flat when selecting them ! - two men have joined the two girls,and apparently it works quite well.Naturally we consulted all the parents concerned beforehand and got their consent.

So the circle is closing and hopefully we are on the road to more progress.

I4) Looking back .

How did we manage to achieve all this under modest financial conditions in a small town and with not trained personel available? Every fortnight we have staff-meetings at which take part also 2-3 members of the voluntary Managing Committee,the social worker and all the counsillors working in the Hostel and the flats. At these meetings everything coming up during the week is discussed and we try to find a solution.Nothing is put under the carpet. Thus all the personel is keen in his work and tries to give his best;gradually small progress in many lines is achieved.Our work becomes better,our workers become more qualified and our residents move on towards more Independence.

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